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REMARKS

Applicants have considered the outstanding official action. It is respectfully submitted that all the claims are directed to patentable subject matter as set forth below.

Initially, applicants respectfully acknowledge the Examiner's allowance of claims 26 and 27.

Claims 21-25 and 28-31 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement on the asserted basis that the limitation "free edges" in claim 21 is not disclosed in the specification. Claims 21-25 and 28-31 are also rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite on the asserted basis that the term "free edges" in claim 21 is not disclosed in the specification and thus is unclear. Claim 21 has been amended to delete the objected to term and use the term "outermost." The amendment was to distinguish the claimed "edge" from an interior point of joinder between the central zone and the peripheral zone. Applicants, however, respectfully submit that the objected to language of claim 21 complies with the written description requirement and is definite. One skilled in the art, in conjunction with the description and drawings would

understand "free edges" to be referring to the unattached edges 3 and 4 of cut product 1 as shown in Figure 1. Clearly, the cut or precut format can have only one "outermost edge." Accordingly, applicants submit that the claims are definite. Withdrawal of the § 112 rejections are, therefore, respectfully requested.

Claims 21-25 and 28-31 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over newly cited U.S. Patent No. 2,020,668 (Wandel) in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,307,141 (Walbrun).

Claim 21 is the sole independent claim at issue in the § 103(a) rejection. Claim 21 claims an absorbent paper product comprising at least two superposed plies cut or precut into a format with outermost edges, a peripheral zone along the edges, and a central zone enclosed by the peripheral zone, wherein the plies are joined together by marking patterns at compacted zones on one side of the plies without corresponding salients on an opposite side of the plies, without glue at least along a segment of the peripheral zone, and wherein at least one of the at least two superposed plies has an embossing pattern in the central zone and wherein the at least two plies have a thickness along the peripheral zone which is less than the thickness of the at least two plies in the central zone, and wherein

the marking patterns are patterns constituted of simple or complex elements.

Wandel teaches cellulose crepe tissue towels and handkerchiefs which are composed of two or more sheets of absorbent cellulose crepe tissue which are superposed but unattached to each other except along a band or line 3 which may be of any desired width but which lies a substantial distance inside the margin of the handkerchief ordinarily equal to the hem 4,4a (page 1, column 2, lines 40-51). In the outer border or hem outside of the band, each sheet is independently ruffled so that these sheets are not only unattached but are physically separated because of the fact that the ruffling of one fails to complement that of the other. (See page 1, column 2, line 54 to page 2, column 1, line 5; and Figure 2). The band 3 is set inward from the edge of the sheets to form a ruffled hem which eliminates harsh edges and makes possible a new and better tissue handkerchief which is soft in every part, including the extreme edges (page 2, column 1, lines 21-26). Wandel teaches that the band 3 is a continuous pressed area (page 2, column 1, lines 65-74, and Figure 2), not marking patterns at compacted zones as claimed. The marking patterns of the claimed invention are constituted of simple

or complex elements. (See specification page 11, line 36 through page 12, line 3). Accordingly, the marking patterns of the claimed invention are not a continuous pressed surface as in the band of Wandel. Moreover, the band of Wandel functions to increase the thickness of the sheets at the periphery of the handkerchief outside of the band, as shown in Figure 2, which is contrary to the claimed invention wherein the at least two plies have a thickness along the peripheral zone which is less than the thickness of the at least two plies in the central zone.

Additionally, Wandel does not teach marking patterns at compacted zones on one side of the plies without corresponding salients on an opposite side of the plies as claimed. As acknowledged by the Examiner, Wandel does not teach an embossed pattern on at least one of the superposed plies in the central zone as claimed. Accordingly, Wandel does not teach or suggest the claimed invention and does not render the claimed invention obvious within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

Wandel is applied in combination with Walbrun. Walbrun does not make up for the shortcomings of Wandel as set forth above. Specifically, the embossing pattern 26 taught in Walbrun is not an embossing pattern as claimed by

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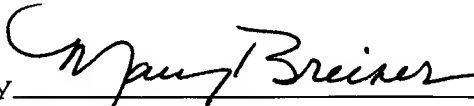
applicants as evidenced by the manner that thickness is provided to the product. The thickness of the central zone of Walbrun is not provided by the perforations formed by members 26, but rather by embossments of the total central zone. As set forth at column 3, lines 27-35, the finished sheet is rendered highly absorbent by the presence of inwardly projecting mutually confronting fibers 21c and 22c disposed about and created by the formulation of perforations 21a and 22a by members 26 in the pocket-perforations of the plies. The claimed product to the contrary has an embossing pattern inducing a higher thickness for the central part of the product with regard to the thickness of the peripheral zone. Neither Wandel nor Walbrun suggest any motivation to modify the teachings of Wandel or Walbrun in order to provide the claimed invention. Accordingly, Wandel in combination with Walbrun does not render the claimed invention obvious within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). Withdrawal of the § 103 rejection is respectfully requested.

Reconsideration and allowance of the claims is respectfully urged.

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Respectfully submitted,

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